The bill isn't all bad. It authorizes a much-needed increase in the size of the U.S. Border Patrol. It would establish new, more efficient procedures for verifying the status of legal immigrants. It would provide tougher penalties for document fraud and for those who smuggle aliens into the country.

But there are so many harsh, immigrant-bashing provisions in the bill that, on balance, it deserves a veto. This is an issue that cries out for resolution after the election—when lawmakers are less inclined to use the immigration issue as a political football.

If President Clinton vetoes the measure, Republicans are sure to paint him as ''soft'' on illegal immigrants. Indeed, Bob Dole is already hitting on that very theme because of the president's unwillingness to purge the classrooms of the children of illegal aliens.

But as a matter of principle, Clinton should stand up to the Republicans this time and refuse to participate in their immigrant-bashing.

This is another case where politics makes for bad public policy.

A DANGEROUS IMMIGRATION BILL

(New York Times, Editorial)

As the White House and members of Congress make final decisions this week about a severely flawed immigration bill, they seem more concerned with protecting their political interests than the national interest. The bill should be killed.

Debate over the bill has concentrated on whether it should contain a punitive amendment that would close school doors to illegal-immigrant children. But even without that provision, it is filled with measures that would harm American workers and legal immigrants, and deny basic legal protections to all kinds of immigrants. At the same time, the bill contains no serious steps to prevent illegal immigrants from taking American jobs.

Its most dangerous provisions would block Federal courts from reviewing many Immigration and Naturalization Service actions. This would remove the only meaningful check on the I.N.S., an agency with a history of abuse. Under the bill, every court short of the Supreme Court would be effectively stripped of the power to issue injunctions against the I.N.S. when its decisions may violate the law or the Constitution.

Injunctions have proven the only way to correct system-wide illegalities. A court injunction, for instance, forced the I.N.S. to drop its discriminatory policy of denying Haitian refugees the chance to seek political asylum.

On an individual level, legal immigrants convicted of minor crimes would be deported with no judicial review. If they apply for naturalization, they would be deported with no judicial review. If they apply for naturalization, they would be deported for such crimes committed in the past. The I.N.S. would gain the power to pick up people it believes are illegal aliens anywhere, and deport them without a court review if they have been here for less than two years.

The bill would also diminish America's tradition of providing asylum to the persecuted. Illegal immigrants entering the country, who may not speak English or be familiar with American law, would be summarily deported if they do not immediately request asylum or express fear of persecution. Those who do would have to prove that their fear was credible—a tougher standard than is internationally accepted—to an I.N.S. official on the spot, with no right to an interpreter or attorney.

Scam artists with concocted stories would be more likely to pass the test than the genuinely persecuted, who are often afraid of authority and so traumatized they cannot recount their experiences. Applicants would have a week to appeal to a Justice Department administrative judge but no access to real courts before deportation.

The bill would also go further than the recently adopted welfare law in attacking legal immigrants. Under the immigration bill they could be deported for using almost any form of public assistance for a year, including English classes. It would make family reunification more difficult by requiring high incomes for sponsors of new immigrants. The bill would also require workers who claim job discrimination to prove that an employer intended to discriminate, which is nearly impossible.

A bill that grants so many unrestricted powers to the Government should alarm Republicans as well as Democrats. This is not an immigration bill but an immigrant-bashing bill. It deserves a quick demise.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, we do have a very important piece of legislation that has been in the making for quite some time. I know Senators on both sides of the aisle are very interested in it and have been working on it in committee and in conference. This is the water resources conference report.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the conference report to accompany S. 640.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the House to the bill (S. 640) to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective Houses this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of the conference report.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of September 25, 1996.)

Mr. CHAFEE. Mr. President, today the Senate will consider the conference report to accompany S. 640, the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. This measure, similar to water resources legislation enacted in 1986, 1988, 1990, and 1992, is comprised of water resources project and study authorizations, as well as important policy initiatives, for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program.

S. 640 was introduced on March 28, 1995, and was reported by the Environment and Public Works Committee to the full Senate on November 9, 1995. The measure was adopted unanimously by the Senate on July 11, 1996. On July 30 of this year, the House of Representatives adopted its version of the legislation.

Since that time, we have worked together with our colleagues from the House of Representatives and the administration to reach bipartisan agreement on a sensible compromise measure. Because of the numerous differences between the Senate- and House-passed bills, completion of this conference report has required countless hours of negotiation.

To ensure that the items contained in this legislation are responsive to the Nation's most pressing water infrastructure and environmental needs, we have adhered to a set of criteria established in previous water resources law. Mr. President, let me take a few moments here to discuss these criteria—that is—the criteria used by the conference committee to determine the merit of proposed projects, project studies, and policy directives.

On November 17, 1986, almost 10 years ago, under President Reagan, we enacted the Water Resources Development Act of 1986. Importantly, the 1986 act marked an end to the 16-year deadlock between Congress and the executive branch regarding authorization of the Army Corps Civil Works Program.

In addition to authorizing numerous projects, the 1986 act resolved long-standing disputes relating to cost-sharing between the Army Corps and non-Federal sponsors, waterway user fees, environmental requirements and, importantly, the types of projects in which Federal involvement is appropriate and warranted.

The criteria used to develop the legislation before us are consistent with the reforms and procedures established in the landmark Water Resources Development Act of 1986.

Is a project for flood control, navigation, environmental restoration, or some other purpose cost-shared in a manner consistent with the 1986 act?

Have all of the requisite reports and studies on economic, engineering, and environmental feasibility been completed for major projects?

Are the projects and policy initiatives consistent with the traditional and appropriate mission of the Army Corps?

Should the Federal Government be involved?

These, Mr. President, are the fundamental questions that we have applied to the provisions contained in the pending conference report.

As I noted at the outset, water resources legislation has been enacted on a biennial basis since 1986, with the exception of 1994. As such, we have a 4-year backlog of projects reviewed by the Army Corps and submitted to Congress for authorization.

The measure before us authorizes 33 flood control, environmental restoration, inland navigation, and harbor projects which have received a favorable report by the Chief of Engineers.

Fourteen other water resources projects are included for authorization, contingent upon the Congress receiving a favorable Chief's report by December 31 of this year. The estimated Federal cost of this bill is $3.8 billion.

I would like to note that almost one-fourth of the cost of this bill, or an estimated $890 million, is specifically dedicated to environmental restoration and protection. In terms of projects, programs and policies, this is far and away the most environmentally significant Water Resources Development Act to have been assembled by the Congress.

What are some of the important new policy and program initiatives included in the bill? First, we have included a provision proposed by the administration to clarify the cost-sharing for dredged material disposal associated with the operation and maintenance of harbors.

Currently, Federal and non-Federal responsibilities for construction of dredged material disposal facilities vary from project to project, depending on when the project was authorized, and the method or site selected for disposal.

For some projects, the costs of providing dredged material disposal facilities are all Federal. For others, the non-Federal sponsor bears the entire cost of constructing disposal facilities. This arrangement is inequitable for numerous ports.

In addition, the failure to identify economically and environmentally acceptable disposal options has reduced operations and increased cargo costs in many port cities. Regrettably, this is the case for the Port of Providence in Rhode Island.

Under this bill, the costs of constructing dredged material disposal facilities will be shared in accordance with the cost-sharing formulas established for general navigation features by section 101(a) of the 1986 Water Resources Development Act. This would apply to all methods of dredged material disposal including open water, upland and confined. This provision will allow ports like the one in Providence to compete on an equal footing.

We have also expanded section 1135 of the 1986 act in this bill. Currently, section 1135 authorizes the Secretary of the Army to review the structure and operation of existing projects for possible modifications—at the project itself—which will improve the quality of the environment. The 1986 act authorizes a $5 million Federal cost-sharing cap for each such project and a $25 million annual cap for the entire program.

The revision included here does not increase the existing dollar limits. Instead, it authorizes the Secretary to implement small fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects in cooperation with non-Federal interests in those situations where mitigation is required off of project lands.

Third, we have included a provision to shift certain dam safety responsibilities from the Army Corps to the Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]. This change, proposed by Senator BOND and supported by the two agencies, authorizes a total of $22 million over 5 years for FEMA to conduct dam safety inspections and to provide technical assistance to the States.

Next, a provision has been included to address the administration's proposal to discontinue Army Corps involvement in shore protection projects. The provision directs continued beach and shoreline protection, restoration and renourishment activities which are economically justified. I want to credit Senators MACK and BRADLEY, in particular, for their efforts on this matter.

Mr. President, this legislation includes landmark Everglades restoration provisions. On June 11 of this year, the administration submitted its plan to restore and protect the Everglades.

The conferees have worked closely with the Florida delegation to modify and improve the administration's proposal to reverse damage done to this critical natural resource.

The provision we have agreed to would: expedite the Corps study process for future restoration activities; formally establish the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration Task Force; authorize $75 million for the implementation of critical projects through fiscal year 1999; and authorize important modifications to the existing Canal–51 and Canal–111 projects.

Mr. President, I would like to highlight an important cost-sharing reform made necessary by current budget circumstances. The non-Federal share for flood control projects has been increased from the current 25 percent to 35 percent. The fact of the matter is that Corps of Engineers's construction dollars are increasingly scarce.

In order to meet the very real flood control needs across the nation, we are forced to require greater participation by non-Federal project sponsors. Importantly, the bill also includes prudent, yet meaningful ability-to-pay eligibility reforms for poor areas.

Also provided here is a pilot program to demonstrate the benefits of privatizing the management of wastewater treatment plants through long-term lease arrangements. Over the past 25 years, Congress has made a considerable investment in protecting water quality by working with States and cities to ensure the proper treatment and disinfection of domestic sewage. Federal appropriations exceeding $65 billion under the Clean Water Act and $10 billion through the Department of Agriculture have supported grants and loans for the construction of sewage treatment plants.

But in recent years, the flow of funds from the Federal level has slowed while needs at the local level have increased. The most recent survey by EPA indicates that the cost to build and maintain needed sewage collection and treatment facilities across the country exceeds $130 billion. We can't close that gap with Federal tax dollars and local governments are hard-pressed to keep up.

One source of funds that remains virtually untapped is private financing and operation of these facilities. Although many cities are receiving their drinking water from privately owned utilities, this is a much rarer occurrence for the ownership and operation of sewage treatment plants.

To encourage privatization, as it is sometimes called, President Bush issued an Executive order establishing a Federal policy for the sale of sewage plants now owned by cities to entities in the private sector. A policy change is necessary, because the law now requires that any Federal assistance received to build the plant must be repaid from the proceeds of the sale. The Executive order requires that only the undepreciated value of the grant be repaid.

However, sales are not the only means to encourage private investment in these facilities. Another option is a long-term lease. This approach may be more advantageous than a sale because sewage plants that remain in the ownership of municipal government agencies are subject to less stringent pollution control regulations than those that are owned by private entities.

There has only been one outright sale under the Executive order, but several communities including Wilmington, DE, and Cranston, RI, are looking at long-term lease arrangements.

To encourage this approach, the conference report provides that the requirement to repay grants that applies under the Clean Water Act and the Executive order in the case of a sale would not apply to leases if two conditions are met. First, the municipal agency must retain ownership of the facility.

And second, EPA must determine that the lease furthers the purposes and objectives of the Clean Water Act. Our principal aim here is to assure that privatization does not lead to disinvestment. When the Federal Government provided the grant to build the plant, we required the city to collect rates sufficient to maintain the plant and keep it in good working order.

The law and the Executive order also require that the consumer charges supporting maintenance and reinvestment be imposed in a fair and reasonable way. The administrator is to look to these and other requirements of the Clean Water Act to ensure that privatization does not undermine the purposes for which the grant and loan programs to finance the construction of sewage treatment plants were first enacted.

Mr. President, nothing in this legislation directs EPA to approve any particular lease arrangement. As I have said, the city of Cranston in my home State has developed what I believe to be an excellent proposal. Mayor Traficante is to be commended on the innovative approach that he is taking

to hold down the costs of municipal government for the people of his city.

Cranston has worked closely with EPA to develop the details of its lease and we very much appreciate the assistance that EPA has provided. There has been a question on whether Cranston would be required to repay part of its grant in the event the lease is completed. This legislation would answer that question, but only if EPA determines that lease arrangement serves the purposes and objectives of the Clean Water Act.

Again, Mr. President, in the area of environmental protection, one of the most difficult water quality problems is the discharge of untreated sewage into rivers, lakes, and estuaries from combined sanitary and stormwater sewers. Sewage treatment plants are designed to handle all of the wastewater generated by a community during dry weather periods.

But for the 1,200 communities that have systems with connections between the stormwater and domestic sewage pipes, large storm events can overwhelm the capacity of the treatment works and lead to discharges of untreated wastewater. This problem is one of the most significant unresolved issues in water quality today.

We have this problem in Rhode Island. The intermittent discharges from our combined sewer overflows have led to closures of swimming beaches and shellfishing beds. Rhode Island is well on the way to correcting the problem, but it will be an expensive undertaking.

In fact, the solution—a planned underground tunnel to hold stormwater runoff until it can be treated—is the biggest public construction project ever planned for the State, with expected costs exceeding $450 million. The bill includes an authorization of modest Federal assistance to Rhode Island to solve this problem and to pay for the water quality mandate imposed by the Federal Clean Water Act.

Mr. President, this legislation is vitally important for countless States and communities across the country.

For economic and life-safety reasons, we must maintain our harbors, ports and inland waterways, flood control levees, shorelines, and the environment.

Despite the fact that this package represents a 4-year backlog of project authorizations, it is consistent with the overall funding levels authorized in previous water resources measures. I urge my colleagues to support the conference report.

Before I yield the floor, Mr. President, I would like to pay tribute to just a handful of the many individuals responsible for this important legislation. First, I would like to thank Senators WARNER, SMITH, BAUCUS, and MOYNIHAN for their hard work as conferees.

Likewise, we could not have reached agreement this year without the efforts of House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman BUD SHUSTER, his ranking minority member, JIM OBERSTAR, Representative SHERWOOD BOEHLERT, and their excellent staff.

We have worked closely with the administration, Mr. President, and I want to recognize the valuable input of Assistant Secretary Martin Lancaster. Secretary Lancaster and his team, including Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Davis, Jim Rausch, Gary Campbell, Milton Reider, Bill Schmidtz, John Anderson, Susan Bond, and others have aided us immeasurably.

Finally, I want to thank the Senate staff who have worked so hard on this bill. On Senator BAUCUS's staff, I extend my appreciation to Jo-Ellen Darcy and Tom Sliter. On the Republican side, I want to thank staff members Ann Loomis, Chris Russell, Steve Shimberg, Linda Jordan, Stephanie Brewster, Dan Delich and Senate legislative counsel, Janine Johnson.

I again urge the adoption of the conference report and yield the floor.

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, the Senate now has before it the conference report to accompany S. 640, the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. I would like to compliment the conferees on the fine work they have done in bringing this conference report to the Senate for resolution before the 104th Congress adjourns.

A great deal of work has been done by the House and Senate committees, working together, to reach this point. Everyone involved has been diligent in applying sound criteria for determining the worthiness of individual projects.

I particularly want to commend the conferees for deleting the House provision that would have increased the navigation season on the Missouri River. The operation of the Missouri River is a controversial issue in my State. The Corps of Engineers is currently in the middle of a comprehensive review to determine the best way to manage the river for all interests, including recreation, navigation, irrigation, hydropower and water supply.

For Congress to intervene at this stage of the reevaluation, to predetermine its outcome, would have been counterproductive to a fair and equitable resolution of this issue. I thank the House conferees for receding to the Senate on this issue.

There are some laudable provisions in this conference report, most notably the changes in flood control policy. With tighter Federal budgets, there is a growing need for local interests to become even more committed to their projects. The conference report changes the current Federal cost share for flood control projects from 75 percent to 65 percent.

It also reforms the so-called ability-to-pay provisions of current law to make them more meaningful. It requires floodplain management plans and the consideration of nonstructural alternatives to traditional flood control facilities. Finally, the conference report requires the corps, for the first time, to provide levee owners with a manual describing what they must do in order to maintain a levee to corps specifications.

Another important provision of the bill directs the Secretary to provide increased emphasis on recreation opportunities at corps facilities. And it recognizes the problem of funding disposal facilities for dredged materials and allows that cost to be considered when calculating the overall cost of a navigation project.

Mr. President, while all of these provisions are important improvements to current law and corps policy, I have one overriding concern with this conference report and that is its cost. This bill authorizes $3.8 billion in new Federal spending.

When the Senate considered this bill earlier this year, I voiced concern that the cost of the bill at that time—$3.3 billion—was at odds with our efforts to balance the budget. Since that time, the cost of the bill has grown. I have long supported investments in our infrastructure, including our water infrastructure. They are necessary if America is to retain its competitive advantage and keep a sound base of manufacturing jobs.

But we need to make choices about these investments, hard choices. And while the majority of the projects in this bill are worthy ones, the truth is that we simply cannot afford them all at this time.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, we are at the end of a very long road in the process of enacting the 1996 Water Resources Development Act authorizing various water resources projects to enhance flood protection, navigation, environmental protection, and related Corps of Engineers projects. Special thanks and congratulations are in order for the Chairman of the full committee, Senator CHAFEE and his ranking member, Senator BAUCUS and the Subcommittee Chairman, Senator WARNER. They and their excellent staff have carried the difficult burden of sorting through in a bipartisan manner these very complex and sensitive issues—issues that are of vital concern to many in this country but particulary for my State of Missouri.

For States like Missouri, who rely greatly on water resources, this legislation is crucial to provide safety, economic development opportunities, and cost-effective navigation on our inland waterway system. Since 1928, for every dollar the corps has spent on flood control, 8 dollars' worth of damages have been avoided. This 8 to 1 benefit to cost ratio does not account for the economic development and job creation benefits that flood protection provides. Recent flooding has highlighted the need to maintain this commitment and keep the Corps of Engineers engaged in partnering with Missouri citizens in this regard. This is a safety, jobs, and international competitiveness issues pure and simple.

Again, I applaud the efforts of the chairman and urge strongly support for this bipartisan legislation.

THE EPA LONG ISLAND SOUND OFFICE

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to note the critical importance of this legislation, the Water Resources Development Act, to the future of Connecticut's most valuable natural resource, Long Island Sound.

Included in the bill is a provision reauthorizing the EPA's Long Island Sound Office [LISO], which was established by legislation I was proud to sponsor 6 years ago, and which is now responsible for coordinating the massive clean-up effort ongoing in the Sound. Quite simply, the LISO is the glue holding this project together, and I want to express my deep appreciation to the chairman and ranking member of the Environment and Public Works Committee—Senators CHAFEE and BAUCUS—for their help in making sure this office stays open for business.

Mr. President, the Long Island Sound Office has been given a daunting task—orchestrating a multibillion dollar, decade-long initiative that requires the cooperation of nearly 150 different Federal, State and municipal agents and offices. Despite the odds, and the limited resources it has had to work with, the LISO is succeeding. Over the last few years, the EPA office has developed strong working relationships with the State environmental protection agencies in Connecticut and New York, local government officials along the Sound coastline and a number of proactive citizen groups. Together, these many partners have made tremendous progress toward meeting the six key goals we identified in the Sound's long-term conservation and management plan.

The plan's top priority is fighting hypoxia, which is caused by the release of nutrients into the Sound's 1,300 square miles of water. Thanks in part to the LISO's efforts, nitrogen loads have dropped 5,000 pounds per day from the baseline levels of 1990, exceeding all expectations. In addition, all sewage treatment plants in Connecticut and in New York's Westchester, Suffolk, and Nassau counties are now in compliance with the no net increase agreement brokered by the LISO, while the four New York City plants that discharge into the East River are expected to be in compliance by the end of this year. And the LISO is coordinating 15 different projects to retrofit treatment plants with new equipment that will help them reduce the amount of nitrogen reaching the Sound.

The LISO and its many partners have made great strides in other areas, such as cracking down on the pathogens, toxic substances, and litter that have been finding their way into the Sound watershed and onto area beaches. A major source of toxic substances are industrial plants, and over the last few years the LISO has helped arrange more than 30 pollution prevention assessments at manufacturing facilities in Connecticut that enable companies to reduce emissions and cut their costs. Also, New York City has recently reduced the amount of floatable debris it produces by 70 percent, thanks to the use of booms on many tributaries and efforts to improve the capture of combined sewer overflows.

With Congress' help, the LISO will soon be able to build on that progress and significantly broaden its efforts to bring the Sound back to life. This week the House and Senate approved an appropriation of the $700,000 for the Long Island Sound Office, doubling our commitment from the current fiscal year. These additional funds will be used in part to launch an ambitious habitat restoration project. The States of New York and Connecticut have been working with the LISO and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a long-term strategy in this area, and they have already identified 150 key sites. The next step is to provide grants to local partnerships with local towns and private groups such as the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and The Nature Conservancy, which would focus on restoring tidal and freshwater wetlands, submerged aquatic vegetation, and areas supporting anadromous fish populations.

The funding will also be used for site-specific surveys to identify and correct local sources of non-point source pollution. This effort will focus on malfunctioning septic systems, stormwater management, and illegal stormwater connections, improper vessel waste disposal, and riparian protection. All of these sources contribute in some way to the release of pathogens and toxic compounds into the Sound, a problem that is restricting the use of area beaches and shellfish beds and hurting our regional economy.

Finally, the LISO will continue to build on the successful public education and outreach campaign it initiated last year. In New York, the LISO has already been in contact with public leaders in 50 local communities, held follow-up meetings with officials in 15 key areas, and scheduled on-the-water workshops for this fall. The LISO is planning to conduct a similar effort to reach out to Connecticut communities in 1997.

All of this could have been put in jeopardy, however, if we had not acted to extend the LISO's authorization, which is set to expire next week. The clean-up project is a team effort, with many important contributors, but it would be extremely difficult for those many partners to work in concert and keep moving forward without the leadership and coordination that the LISO has supplied. So I want to thank my colleagues, especially my friends from Rhode Island and from Montana, for passing this provision before the LISO's authorization lapsed.

The people of Connecticut care deeply about the fate of the Sound, not only because of its environmental importance but also because of its importance as one of our region's most valuable economic assets. With the steps we've taken this week, we have reassured them that we remained committed to preserving this great natural resource, and that we are not about to sell Long Island Sound short.

EVERGLADES RESTORATION PROVISION

Mr. MACK. Mr. President, I rise today in strong support of the conference report on the Water Resources Development Act and, in particular, the provision in the bill relating to the restoration of Florida's Everglades. I want to especially thank the distinguished chairman of the committee, Mr. CHAFEE. The Senator from Rhode Island clearly understands the unique nature of the Everglades problem and, on behalf of all Floridians, I extend my appreciation for his efforts on behalf of this legislation.

It is no secret, Mr. President, that the Everglades are a resource unique and precious to all Americans. This ''river of grass''—extending from the Kissimmee chain of lakes through to Florida Bay and the Florida Keys—is the primary source of south Florida's drinking water, critical to our cultural heritage and essential to our continued economic well-being. As the Everglades go, Mr. President, so goes south Florida. How best to craft a balance between the urban, agricultural, and environmental interests presents one of the greatest challenges facing this generation of Floridians.

This Congress has already demonstrated its unwavering commitment to this resource by appropriating $200 million in direct funding for Everglades restoration during consideration of the farm bill earlier this year. This move represents the single-largest funding commitment to the Everglades in history and is indicative of the interest this Congress has in ensuring that this important resource is passed on to future generations.

It has not always been so. In an effort to provide flood control for the rapidly-growing region, Congress in 1948 authorized the massive central and southern Florida project. The goal of this effort was to drain the swamp through a series of canals extending from Lake Okeechobee to the sea. The result was thousands of acres opened to agriculture and development and an unprecedented economic expansion in the region.

This was not, however, without a significant cost. The reallocation of water resulting from the project disrupted the natural hydroperiod of the Everglades. Wildlife populations plummeted and fresh water flows were diminished. Critical resources like Florida Bay—a once-vibrant body of water that sustained both a healthy environment and a strong coastal economy—began to wither on the vine. As Florida's coastal communities felt the effect of this harm, an effort began to rethink the